

REMARKS

The pending Office Action addresses and rejects claims 1, 3, 4, 6-9, 12, 14-16, 18, 20-22, and 26. Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter with respect to claims 2 and 17.

Amendments to the Claims

As noted above, in the present Office Action, as well as in the previous Office Action, the Examiner indicated that claims 2 and 17 represent allowable subject matter. Since such indication was given prior to Applicant's amendment submitted on October 29, 2007, Applicants amend independent claims 1 and 16 to remove the limitations previously added and to incorporate all of the limitations of allowable claims 2 and 17. Claims 1 and 16 are therefore in condition for allowance.

Claims 12 and 13 are amended to correct minor errors, and to correspond to amended claim 1. Claim 22 is amended to recite a u-shaped mating component with a recess, and to recite that the receiving component has a connecting member that is configured to be received in the recess of the u-shaped mating component. Support for this amendment can be found throughout the application and in the drawings, for example in paragraph 0022 of the published application. Claim 26 is amended to merely clarify that the spring applies a biasing force along the longitudinal axis to the locking mechanism.

No new matter is added.

Claim Rejections

The Examiner rejects claims 1, 3, 4, 6-9, 12, 14-16, 18, 20-22 and 26 pursuant to 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,551,316 of Rinner et al. ("Rinner").

While Applicants continue to disagree, as noted above, independent claims 1 and 16 are amended to include the allowable subject matter of claims 2 and 17, and thus claims 1 and 16, as well as claims 3, 4, 6-9, 12, 14-15, 18, 20-21 which depend therefrom, are in condition for allowance. Remaining claims 22 and 26 distinguish over Rinner as explained below.

Claim 22

As noted above, claim 22 is amended to recite a u-shaped mating component with a recess, and to further recite that the receiving component has a connecting member that is configured to be received in the recess of the u-shaped mating component. Rinner does not teach or even suggest such an arrangement. The Examiner argues that the work piece blade ends (71) form the claimed mating component and that the bar ends (68) form the claimed receiving component. However, as shown in FIGS. 4-7 and 9-12 of Rinner, the work piece blade ends (71) are "flat-sided." See Rinner at Col. 4, line 6. There is no recess formed in the ends (71) and no portion of the ends (71) is u-shaped. Likewise, the sockets (69) in the bar ends (68) do not have any portion that can form the claimed connecting member configured to be received in the recess of the u-shaped mating component.

Claim 26

As noted above, claim 26 is amended to clarify that the spring applies a biasing force along the longitudinal axis to the locking mechanism. Rinner does not teach or even suggest such an arrangement. To the contrary, as shown in FIG. 13 of Rinner, the spring (77) biases the pin (76) *perpendicular* to the longitudinal axis of the receiving component (68), not along the longitudinal axis of the receiving component.

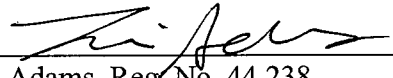
Accordingly, independent claims 1, 16, 22 and 26 distinguish over Rinner and represent allowable subject matter. Claims 2-4, 6-9, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, and 21 are allowable at least because they depend from an allowable base claim.

Conclusion

Accordingly, all claims are now in condition for allowance, and allowance thereof is respectfully requested. The Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned attorney for Applicants if such communication is deemed to expedite prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: January 17, 2008



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